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Khomeini's Reactions to the Departure of the Shah

Khomeini's attention has returned to the U.S.-Iran confrontation with the departure of the Shah for Panama and the temporary defusing of the Azarbaijan uprising. As the possibility of the Shah's return becomes increasingly remote, Khomeini's animus has shifted to the U.S.

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Khomeini was diverted by the uprising by Shariat-Madari's followers in Azerbaijan. it was much more difficult for Khomeini to invoke his characteristic outside enemy defense against the uprising. Dealing with Shariat-Madari is particularly conflictual for Khomeini because of the esteem with which Shariat-Madari is held as a religious leader, because he has his own potentially large following, and because he reportedly saved Khomeini from harsh punishment at the hands of SAVAK in 1963. (1,2) While Khomeini was thus diverted, the more moderate members of his entourage were temporarily given a wider latitude for action and may well have had greater influence upon their leader so that an apparent softening resulted, as exemplified by Khomeini's agreement to proceed with an international tribunal and to permit visitors to the hostages. Domestic difficulties could again divert Khomeini's attention, especially if they involve Shariat-Madari, giving the more moderate members of Khomeini's entourage more influence.

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